

AB 3001 – ELECTRONIC WASTE RECYCLING ACT EXTENSION

Assemblymember Fran Pavley

IN BRIEF

AB 3001 would expand California's successful Electronics Waste Recycling Act to cover all personal computers. Existing law is limited to computer monitors, laptop computers, and televisions. This measure would establish a point of sale recycling fee of \$6. Revenue would be used to finance the collection of discarded computers through a network of 'free and convenient' recycling locations and programs.

THE ISSUE

California disposes over 500,000 tons of electronic waste every year. The Department of Toxic Substances Control has determined that most electronic devices are toxic, and as of February of this year were banned from landfills.

According to the US EPA, about 70% of the toxic heavy metals found in landfills come from electronic waste. EPA has also concluded that most landfills will ultimately leak. Lead, mercury, cadmium and a host of other toxic heavy metals contained in most consumer electronics pose a real threat to public health and the environment. This brew of toxic substances can damage nervous, kidney and reproductive systems, while some of the metals contain known carcinogens. Currently, less than 10% of consumer electronics are recycled.

California's Electronic Waste Recycling Act (EWRA), enacted by SB 20 (Sher) in 2003, provides one of the models of success in this area. In just one year, the program's core objective of providing consumers with 'free and convenient' recycling opportunities has been achieved, with the establishment of more than 430 e-waste recycling locations statewide, and the recycling of more than 1.7 million computer monitors and televisions.

However, current law covers less than half of the state's currently disposed electronic waste. By expanding the scope of the EWRA, we can immediately expand the existing collection infrastructure to provide free and convenient recycling for the more than 6 million computers that become obsolete in California everyday (more than 110,000 tons annually).

EXISTING LAW

In 2003, California enacted the Electronic Waste Recycling Act, SB 20 (Sher), which provides consumers with a 'free and convenient' recycling opportunity for covered

electronics (computer monitors, televisions, laptops, and other video display devices). The program uses funds collected from a 'point-of-sale' Advance Recycling Fee (ARF) ranging from \$6 to \$10 per device depending on screen size, assessed on retailers. Funds are used to offset collection and recycling costs for e-waste scrap recyclers.

The legislation was in part a response to an earlier determination by the Department of Toxic Substances Control that computer monitors and televisions contained hazardous levels of toxic heavy metals and were banned from landfills. The measure also includes a provision requiring manufacturers to phase out the use of specified toxic materials

The current definition of Covered Electronic Devices (CEDs) includes: all video display devices with a screen size four inches and larger including computer monitors, laptop computers, televisions, portable DVD players, and many 'gaming' devices. According to state waste and recycling data, California generated approximately 140,000 tons of CEDs in 2005. In the program's first year alone, more than 30,000 tons of CEDs were recycled under EWRA.

THE BILL

AB 3001 will simply amend California's Electronic Waste Recycling Act by expanding the definition of CEDs to include all personal computers. This amendment will expand the scope of the existing law to include the estimated 110,000 tons of toxic computers that are currently disposed of in California annually. Earlier this month, the Washington State Legislature passed a measure establishing a similar e-waste recycling program for that state. The Washington measure includes all personal computers, as well as video display devices.

SUPPORT

Californians Against Waste (Sponsor); California Electronic Asset Recovery; Californians for Alternatives to Toxics; California Refuse Removal Council; California State Association of Counties; Camarillo Recycling; CJSeto Support Services; e-Recycling; Electronic Manufacturers Coalition for Responsible Recycling; League of California Cities; M-Cubed; Planning and Conservation League; Solid Waste Assn. of North America; Waste Management; StopWaste.Org

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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